

Alert Call – Unlawful Norwegian ‘group-work’ Methods in Teacher Training

Kai Sørkjord

Independent researcher of Pedagogy and Philosophy

Abstract

Designed metapedagogical peer-dependency, its benefit and its benefactors: This paper calls attention to the existence, in Norway, of a modern form of pedagogical abuse unimaginable to large portions, perhaps most, of the academic world; a form of abuse that even the fairly suspicious among minds seem unable to suspect, least of all of a nation that outwardly waves the banners of human rights and the rule of law.

1. Introduction

We see it on campuses world-wide – the slogans, all well intended, obviously, but intended to accomplish what? “Diversity !” – yeah; “Different but together !” – hm, really? Do you mean, ‘looking differently, but being of one mind’ or do you actually mean ‘looking, thinking and speaking differently or of a different mind, while being together’, and perhaps even ‘- while debating matters in a rational manner’ ? – because, now that we’re talking about ‘being diverse’ and ‘being different but together’, the notion of ‘diversity of backgrounds, looks, dialects, opinions, perspectives and collected facts’, including the notion of ‘thinking and speaking all of these differences’ (putting together the variety of pieces that actually exist, pieces that go into what in fact is ‘our total reality’) would really amount to ‘being diverse’. So this paper shall keep that notion as our ‘truth-meter’ and hang it up in the background of the academic spectacle about to be presented.

In Norway there used to be a type of school called “The teacher-school” (Norw.: *lærerskolen*), with a body of so-called “lecturers of pedagogy” – most of them with a BA or Master’s Degree (and some with a PhD) in ‘pedagogy & the learning sciences’, a domain labeled “*pedagogikk*” (“pedagogy”), which I usually specify as “Meta-Pedagogy”. It could be said to include ‘learning-psychology’ but that would only be true on the most superficial level. The name ‘teacher-school’ was erased in the 1990s, but the schools in themselves still exist, and their body of teachers of pedagogy too, only now organized as “faculties”, “institutes” and “departments” of “Pedagogy” within colleges and universities; and either relocated to the corridors of the larger schools they now belong to hierarchically, or remaining in sepa-rate buildings, near and far.

The national body of ‘teachers of pedagogy’ – metapedagogues – now as before, have certain cemented properties in common, nationwide; a core set of matters the view on which forms a rigid consensus, nationwide, carried forward ‘apprentice-style-wise’ as they refill the work-force slots with internally trained-into-consensus heirs of Power-Point slides reformatted from ‘overhead’ sheets that once upon a time resulted from someone else’s skimreading of book reviews and summaries of Piaget’s, Vygotsky’s, Kant’s and others’ empirical analyses, obviously usually not resulting from independent critical reading of original publications of these analyses – science whipped to a fluff, fitted into short sentences each of which summarizes an ambiguity from which falsehoods are ‘pulled out’ when they, the ambiguities, are filled into pre-made themes-with-benefit oriented molds.

The mistaken turns in some of the intersections of artificially constructed falsely attributed ambiguities are many and intertwined, and the routes towards beneficial interpretations rather than charitable ones have become powerful tools of manipulation within higher education, the case of Piaget’s cognitive model being one of the most detrimental ones – where the origin in Immanuel Kant’s analysis of the human mind [1] either has not been discovered yet or has been erased from public memory; and the idea of Piaget representing the pedagogical opposite of Vygotsky has been made into an example of the inadequacy of Piaget and planted into the collective consensus. It is a beneficial rhetorical masking of wishful misunderstanding in the past, hidden from view within the curricula it is planted.

Such misunderstood theory is eternally beneficial in certain contexts within the theme-compositions of educators’ lecture-artistry within higher education, where non-script eloquence is aided both by the lightness of whatever material is being presented (the lightness increasing proportionally with the level of constructed ambiguity) and by the presence of useful connections one can hint at by the use of original fragments post-modernistically detached and recombined. It is in this paper-mesh we see the origin of the alleged disagreement between Vygotsky and Piaget universally taught in the lecture halls of pedagogical studies in Norway and beyond, abundantly sampled by myself, in person.

The set of principles operated by in Norwegian ‘pedagogy and learning sciences’ is defended in

elaborate manners that generalize and present a set of available artificial ambiguities that arise from lifting useful particles out of a suppressed or long forgot-ten context (for example Piaget's 'modification of schemata' and Kant's 'natural will to be free'); falsely alleged, but conveniently so. The ambiguities serve to demonstrate the basis for an opinion argued for, and these opinions are often argued through brief articles in newspapers like *The Daily Paper* (Dagbladet) and *Evening Post* (Aftenposten) in Oslo; or *The-Friend-of-the-fatherland* (Fædrelandsvennen) in the southern end of Norway, the Agder region, where the University of Agder (UiA) supplies the media with local "expertise" in "the science of education", much in the same manner that the University of Oslo (UiO) does it to 'its' media contacts in Oslo – contacts who lend their ear to the office-positions called "professor", "amanuensis" (assistant professors with PhD, in line for conditional promotion to the title-bearing office 'professor') and "lektor" (lecturer: assistant professors supposedly without the need for a PhD but who nonetheless often have it, inasmuch as the number of 'positions labelled Professor' is kept as low as administration-regulatory-wise possible). The media contacts, as merchants of 'the readworthy', lend their columns to ambassadors of institutional 'knowledge', and at the same time categorically refuse column manuscripts from non-office-holding writers if they contain certain types of facts that contradict or even falsify (prove to be false) certain institutionally 'offered' knowledges – a phenomenon repeatedly verified by myself.

The handing out of publically ordained specialist consensus in the lecture halls and newspaper columns largely remain apparently unopposed by those who really oppose them, the column discourse never reaching the level of a proper public debate. At the same time Norwegian university boards have members who are lawyers of leading law firms (another associated fact verified empirically by myself), and sometimes have judges of law on the panels that automatically clear their professors in cases of specific evidence-based reported errors of judgment and accusations of incompetency with associated abuses of power during oral exams – verified empirically by myself, with ample evidence: for example in the case of an internal assistant examiner interrupting and taking over the examination process, one in which a visiting main examiner (in English) from U.S.A. had asked me the open question "What did you like the most in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*?", the answer to which the local assistant professor evidently either didn't listen closely to or didn't understand, as proven by myself to the Dean, who feigned a convenient powerlessness and left the unprotected individual student to himself, in a local-corruption-ridden 'group-totalitarianism'-ruled Norway largely

unseen by the world. The U.S. main examiner – who, naturally, understood my point regarding a main theme in *The Great Gatsby* (misapplied altruism) being revealed from the very beginning of the novel – on 'impulse' departed Norway the very next day, a week earlier than he planned, without notifying the university, whose lecturers keep harping on a: the contrast between the two social world's hinted at by Fitzgerald (socially interesting microtextual thematic elements from a list inherited from senior colleagues) and b: the U.S. social context from within which Fitzgerald wrote the book, while in fact being largely oblivious to the main theme development from the very first sentence of the book: "In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'Whenever you feel like criticising anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.' " – where the weakness of the father's advice is specified on page 2 ("And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. ... Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction") and the theme fully forms in the page 4 comment about life being "much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all." [1] And this is only one in a series of incompetency-caused study-related pathologies I ran into within Norway's "higher education" in my pre-Master's-degree studies – vivid eye-openers that a student tends to suppress, until developing the eye that sees the even more clever and distinctly sinister cases of idea-corruption, some of which I am revealing in this paper.

Universities and colleges, in other words, take care of their public image, and, being largely limited only by institution-internally enforced local consensus, academics protect themselves and their colleagues, by various means that include openly lying to and manipulating Deans and internal control organs, short of violating any of the specifically addressed laws they know to be externally enforced. The same strategy can be seen in the way Norwegian universities actively cultivate beneficial connections in the media houses, who loyally block from publishing certain types of manuscripts that lay certain embarrassing facts bare, a censorship that has been thoroughly verified empirically by most dissenting individuals trying to have a say in Norwegian popular-academic journal columns, where access is granted to two classes of manuscripts: representatives of the 'politically correct' and representatives of publically ordained 'providers of knowledge': the holders of offices of higher educational institutions.

Publicized dissent is virtually universally limited to the cases of rather superficial opposition we occasionally have between two 'office-holders', never the kind of opposition that rocks the boat of the institutionalized 'consensus'. In the case of the

evidence I have of veritable flat-earth-notions ruling the ‘world’ of Norwegian Meta-Pedagogy, there is no column open. Neither is there any ‘professor’-position open for new PhDs with new ideas. There is only the chance to compete for an assistant-professor position – labelled “amanuensis” (Latin for “at-the-hand”), without the word “professor” in the title, a position that ‘allows’ the holder to wait in line for a conditional promotion to the state of holding the title “professor”, a promotion that is subject to social criteria that are objectively impossible to satisfy without consistently expressing agreement with ruling local consensus – in a country that outwardly celebrates ‘free speech’. It is a local tyranny that has contributed to horrible consequences domestically, but these cannot be listed in this paper.

One group of pedagogical principles universally adhered to in Norway’s institutions of higher education is the set of principles by which mandatory “group-work” (Norw.: *gruppearbeid*), ‘team work’, is carried out metapedagogically, nationwide – principles that form the set of methods and methodological elements and rationale that shape the metapedagogical process with respect to ‘obligatory group work’. And one such principle is that it be done by way of ‘autonomous groups’, where the notion ‘autonomous’ is not so much a lexical slogan as a rigid unit of ‘metapedagogical practice’, inasmuch as the phenomenon it refers to, ‘group-work-practice’ – hence the meaning imputed to the word ‘autonomous’ in that context – is defined by the metapedagogical practice that shapes the designed instances of so-called ‘group work’, particularly the ‘obligatory’ kind, the kind that makes up the set of ‘learning practices’ that must be passed by each individual who registers for classes in the respectable subject category called ‘pedagogy’.

The entity we call ‘the individual’ is in all mandatory group work, by official ‘Norwegian domain-internal’ institutional design, made dependent on meeting the subjective criteria of ‘continuous group acceptance’ in order to maintain ‘membership’ in the entity to which the objective criteria apply during ‘group work assessment’. In other words, the ‘ticket’ to membership in the entity to which all objective criteria are officially addressed during obligatory ‘group work’ is designed so that it is holy dependent on each individual fulfilling the holy subjective criteria by which the group decides whether to ‘keep’ an individual in the group, any individual.

This, naturally, is extremely harmful psychologically and sociologically. We know this solely by analysis and logical reasoning from universally available knowledge in psychology and sociology.

That learning environment design thus has a built-in mechanism for the classmates that are in one’s own ‘group’ (team) to veto any individual’s access to the ‘group-work-exam’ itself. This, naturally, in itself is objectively illegal, anywhere, but it is indeed

normal ‘practice’ in Norway – I suspect in Scandinavia (Denmark and Sweden too) as a whole, or even in the Nordic group of nations (Iceland and Finland too), but that remains to be investigated.

This is an investigation that cannot be done by ‘tick-an-opinion’ forms handed out to the individuals embedded in the Stockholm Syndrome sphere. The researcher must directly embed him- and herself in the problem in order to see it, disguised as ‘regular students’ – a cover that must be genuine, by way of the researcher personally becoming a genuine ‘regular student’ of these courses.

No questionnaire form can detect this type of violation. Only empiricism can – the personal and direct kind, true empirical research, the kind that forms the basis of this paper. Naturally, this is a method unwanted by the institution, so deception is required, but such deception is warranted as long as it is addressed only towards the motivation for the researcher’s presence.

Detection of the kind I made in Norway’s Meta-Pedagogy can be expected to result in threats whenever these discoveries are addressed and debated in real time, whether one debates them as a ‘regular student’ or blows one’s cover (a cover that only covers the usefulness of oneself actually being a regular student) by openly addressing and debating them as a ‘researcher’ who happens to be a ‘regular student’. In my research the ‘cover’ of normalcy was strictly maintained, simply because it was the normal thing to do, given the directly empirical strategy (the only truly empirical method possible).

2. A defensive threat

The following is an example of the threats aimed at my research as I debated the atrocity in real time, in class, debated and opposed it **‘under partial cover’** as a ‘regular student’ who quite openly is an aspiring PhD candidate. The threatening letter was sent to me from the ‘Director of Studies’ at the UiA (my own translation, leaving spelling- and grammatical errors uncorrected in the Norwegian partial quotes):

{logo} THE UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

[to:] Kai Sørkjord ... Date: 15. January 2009, Our Ref. 07/298 ... Visiting Address: Gimlemoen 25 A ... Not to be made publically available *Publ.1. § 13/law on public admin. § 13* ... Written warning according to Law for universities and colleges § 4-8 (1) ... We (One) refer to earlier conversations and summoning [*innkalling*: “the calling in”] for meetings on circumstances regarding your study-situation, the latest [one] a summoning for [a] meeting 12. of January 2009 with Director of Studies and [the] Institute Leader. You did not show up [meet] for that meeting, and neither did you give notice about [your]

cancellation [*forfall*: “falling off”]. Neither did you show up [*meet*] at the corresponding meeting 15. December 2008.

The background for [the fact that] the university desired [*wished*] [to have] a meeting with you is among other things:

- Complaint from co-students regarding conduct that appears threatening, including repeated telephone calls in the middle of the night to a female costudent.*¹

- Conduct at the office of a female teacher which was perceived as threatening.*²

- Distribution, contrary to regulation, of self-initiated academic note [*Ureglementert distribusjon av faglig notat*] on University-paper [*på universitetets papir*]: ‘with the university’s logo’*³

- Distribution, contrary to regulation, of “bulletin” to an unknown number of persons where co-students as [a] group and named teachers are being subjected to strong criticism, without possibility to defend themselves or oppose allegations made [*Ureglementert distribusjon av bulleteng til et ukjent antall personer der medstudenter som gruppe og navngitte lærere utsettes for sterk kritikk, uten mulighet for å forsvare seg eller imøtegå påstander*]*⁴

This has created considerable unrest in the environment.

This letter is to be viewed as a warning according to Law for universities and colleges § 4-8 (1). The regulation says [*Bestemmelsen lyder*: “*The determination sounds*”]:

(1) A student who in spite of written warning from the board of directors repeatedly behaves in a manner that functions {in a} gravely disturbing {manner} with respect to [“for”] the work of co-students or for the ongoing at the institution otherwise, can after a decision by the board of directors or the institution’s appeals office, acc. to § 5-1, be shown away*⁵ from specified areas of the institution for up to one year. If a student after written warning from the board of directors, still does not respect such a showing away*⁶, the board of directors itself or the institution’s appeals office can, acc. to § 5-1, shut him or her out*⁷ from the study for up to one year.

If you wish to talk with anyone about your situation, you are invited to [*velkommen til*]: “welcome to”] contact Study-Director (“*studiedirektør*”) [Mr.] Bjørn J. Monstad, Institute Leader (“*instituttleder*”) [Ms.] Bjørg Solstad Rustad, evt. [Ms.] Eli Staalesen at the students’ health services. The last mentioned can be reached on telephone no. 381 41354 / 995 07559.

With regards,

(signature)

[Mr.] Tor A. Agedal

University President (“*Universitetsdirektør*”)

(signature)

[Mr.] Bjørn J. Monstad

UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

SERVICEBOKS 422 4604 KRISTIANSAND

TELEFON 381 41000 FAKS 381 41001

ORG.NR. 970 546 200 MVA postmottak@uia.no www.uia.no

*¹ false allegation stemming from my non-submission under the group’s dominant alliance, centered around Person A (later evicted from the course): a female in her twenties who was not a member originally, but who approached us (a 3-member group) on the first day of group work as she rather dramatically dissolved the group she was in by refusing to be in the same group as person B, male in his twenties, who had annoyed many with a mobile phone that kept ringing.

*² based on myself, on one out of two separate occasions telling female meta-pedagogues (teachers of “*pedagogikk*”), in the doorway into their respective offices, that this method is “unlawful and unacceptable” – in itself an experience that threatens their dominant position. I was indeed a threat to the reputation of all four meta-pedagogues, but, regretfully, not a threat to their status as employees. I do remember that I on both occasions used distinct pronunciation for emphasis and a soft voice with a serious intonation when I expressed the threat: “This is unacceptable!”, which must have been very threatening to these particular local enforcers of utter incompetence and violators of key enforceable principles of law that apply to all education – laws that ‘higher education’ cannot claim to be exempt from merely by the particular subset of laws named “Law for higher education” not addressing the particular violation; just like its or any other law’s silence on physical abuse cannot be ‘interpreted’ as the allowing of it.

*³ based on my internally circulated article, which the university’s internal Printing-Department chose to print on ‘university paper’, with my ‘thank you’ but without my request, paper carrying the official University of Agder logo.

*⁴ speaks for itself – it will suffice to add that the title *Open Bulletin* (*Åpen Bulletin*) refers to my internally circulated little journal, addressing, firstly, the unlawful methods carried on by the university’s Institute of Pedagogy; secondly, the misuse of Jean Piaget’s cognitive theory to make it fit the teacher-trainer-authored ‘student control theory’ – pseudo-corroborated by false references to original science (primarily Piaget and Kant); and, thirdly, the abuse of students of pedagogy by the use of Belbin’s ipso

facto ‘for-employment-purposes personality testing’ aka ‘role-testing’ – along ipso-facto ‘slur-formulating scales’ (verbalized slurs, used as personality-categories, badly disguised by being labelled “group-roles” – types of behavior and functioning within the type of group where individuals compete to look the best as ‘goal-serving individuals’ aka “group-serving” individuals), briefly demonstrated below. These are issues to which I have now added Norwegian universities’ violation of the Norwegian ‘Law for the Work Environment’, violations repeatedly argued in Norwegian courts, where ‘The University of [“in”] Agder’ (UiA), ‘The University of Oslo’ (UiO) and others have permanently-on-board lawyer teams performing farce-like spectacles of institutionalized slur-making for long term profitable control of the academic sphere.

*⁵ “*bortvises*”: “be shown away”

*⁶ “*slik bortvisning*”: “such a showing away”: ‘such an act of barring someone’ (from specific areas of the university).

The subject group called “pedagogy” (Norw.: “*pedagogikk*”), incidentally, is one that the mentioned body of lecturers claim is ‘a Norwegian subject’, meaning it allegedly has a content ‘formed by Norwegians’ and which ‘applies to Norway’ in particular – while the same body of lecturers indeed use inherited decades-old misinterpretations of Jean Piaget’s cognitive model as the balance between ‘self-modification’ and ‘stagnation/ insubordination’ – a balance that is really between ‘allowing impressions to enter as they are’ (Accommodation) and ‘seeing them as similar to existing knowledge-structures’ (Assimilation), two “constant”, hence simultaneously operating, “subfunctions” that are “inseparable except by abstraction” (abstract analysis), hence inseparable into two types of phenomena, and not necessarily involving any modification of preexisting structures at all, says Piaget (1967, pp. 13, 200-215 / 1971, pp. 4, 171-185) [3]. But it is nonetheless always a new whole that continuously results from attaching new observations (impressions) to the preexisting cognitive structures/schemata, whether the previous structure “modifies itself” after accommodating an impression, or “remains as it was” (1967, pp. 13, 200 / 1971, pp. 4, 171); and the new whole may or may not constitute a functional modification within the organism, a modification sometimes referred to as ‘an accommodation’, which is a more colloquial usage of the same word (footnote: 1967, p. 18 / 1971, p. 8), referring to an incidental result of the constant subfunction he calls Accommodation. It is a model Piaget obviously learned from Immanuel Kant, who phrased it as the balance between ‘attaching to’ (‘attaching the observed objects to one’s preexisting concepts’) and ‘bringing under’ (‘bringing the same observations under concepts’) (1781, p. 51 / 1787, p.75) [2].

In addition to the politically beneficial (factually so) modification (warping, objectively speaking) of science borrowed from international literature, Norwegian higher education in pedagogy borrows personality tests scripted for the business owner who engages a ‘team’ of job applicants to compete for the same job, hence in fact co-operate for the demise of the competitors for the same job – for example the Belbin’s ‘preferred employer-personality’ aka “preferred team-role” identifier concept, a gravely biased personality-menu that comes in alleged “role” pairs ipso facto ‘personality type’ pairs, pairs in which one personality type is preferred and the other, described in blatantly derogatory manners and slurs, obviously not at all preferred [4]. This is a harmful instrument in any educational context, but most of all in a context with direct consequences for the process of designing children’s learning experiences, hence for the way children view the world.

Individuals shaped by the use of Belbin and the likes (the fake-Piaget-puppet-on-a-string, and so on) in their teacher training (in Meta-Pedagogy), naturally, cannot help but apply their taught paradigm in their work among children (in Pedagogy). This pathology, hence, is what we first of all must attribute any blindness towards bullying to – specifically the blindness that we see among teachers and school administrators. This is the blindness that obstructs parents who complain to teachers and administrators when their children are being abused by peers in the school environment.

Then there is the selective borrowing of material from the international learning sciences, phrased as “Here we use Vygotsky and Bandura”, and so on – but be all that as it may, because there is a much bigger issue embedded in this syndrome, supported by the mentioned misusages of original empirical science shaped into detrimental managerial instruments of people-control.

3. The violation

The problematic issue to not over-shadow by trifle (trifle only in comparison) is this: Virtually all individual courses in pedagogy and absolutely all course programs in pedagogy within these Norwegian institutions of Pedagogical studies include the element of ‘**obligatory group work**’, learning practices in which the **vessel** toward a passing grade in each respective course segment is ‘the group **membership**’, and it is universally combined with the **unlawful** delegation of ‘the right to exclude individuals from the group’ to ‘**the group**’! A given institution might argue that the ‘**right**’ to exclude is more accurately phrased as a ‘**possibility**’, the possibility that ‘the group may **in fact** exclude an individual in it’; and by such rhetoric imagine the factual risk to be a ‘**fact of life**’, beyond control, a fact that frees them from prosecution and rightful

intervention by ‘domain-external agents’, whether school-internal or judicial. No such free ticket, however, can be issued by anyone, whether in academia in general or within the domain of law.

Data excerpt:

The following took place in January of 2009, in a typical institute of ‘Meta-Pedagogy’ (Norwegian: “*Pedagogikk*”) within a typical Norwegian university (UiA). No one ever denied that this took place. On the contrary, the university itself aggressively defended it, perhaps assuming, as the case indeed was, that I had audio-recorded what took place, but seeing themselves as being justified, both by ‘theory’ and ‘established practice’. The following is what takes place all over Norway every semester, in Norway’s institutes, faculties and departments of ‘*Pedagogikk*’, as the domain-holders take care of business as they always do, and have for as long as anyone I know can remember. It is worth noting that even the mere allowing for ‘peer-initiated or peer-operated exclusion of individuals’ to happen – that is, even without explicitly instructing the groups that they actually “may”, “can” or “ought to” (and so on) exclude individuals among them – is just as unlawful as the verbally explicit active contribution to it that we see in the following example.

Everyone present in that Norwegian lecture hall, in January 2009, knew the practices of ‘obligatory group-work’, knew the risks involved, had observed it and taken part in it the preceding semester. This was going to be the course that would teach us the theoretical and practical details of ‘group work’, or so we thought, and this was the first 90-minute lecture on it.

The following is a 3 minute segment half way into the first 45-minute session. Present are approximately 55 students of pedagogy, one senior lecturer (speaking in the transcript) and three assistant or subordinate lecturers, as well as a Sony-Ericsson sound recorder:

TRANSCRIPT

(UiA, Norway, Jan. 2009)

– Lecturer: “You are going to divide yourselves into groups” ... (‘teams’, 3-6 members in each, 4 or 5 being the ideal) ... “Everyone in the group must contribute. What counts regarding the ones who do not contribute is that they are to be weeded out.”

[Norwegian: “Dere skal dele dere inn i grupper”.. “Alle i gruppen må bidra. Dem som ikke bidrar, dem gjelder det å luke ut.”]

– with the active form of the Norwegian verb ‘to weed out’: “... what counts for them is to weed them out.”]

– spoken while stepping forward, bending the upper body forward, reaching to the floor with the right arm, doing a gripping motion with the right hand, and, with a sudden upward motion, ‘ripping’ the simulated ‘weed’ out of the soil of the imagined garden and ‘throwing’ the imagined ‘weed’ up in the air and away to the right.

– Myself (hand raised; the lecturer’s hand signaling that he will take my question): “But who gets to be God?”

– Silence, then unclear expression of surprise, after which, to clarify:

– Myself: “Who will decide who it is that isn’t contributing?”

– Lecturer: “The group !” (no hesitation, clearly spoken.)

The entire threat – everyone must contribute; the ones who do not are to be dismissed by peers within the ‘group’, the ‘team’ of 2-5 classmates, “weeded out” on grounds bound to be subjective, grounds bound to also be unverifiable by the responsible teacher, whose order for the students to ‘form groups’ sets in motion precisely what that particular environment design can be expected to. The ‘group’ or team of classmates is actually given the authority and opportunity to exclude individuals among them from the very vessel of the obligatory group work, the ‘group’ !

The threat was repeated twice before the first 45 minute session ended – on the day I lost all my respect for all things meta-pedagogically twisted, thwarted and fraudulently forged into political tools within Norwegian Meta-Pedagogy, a distinctly utilitarianism-dominated teaching of pedagogy; a domain that is being ‘allowed’, by central government, to violate the most basic of legal and human rights related principles of education, principles of law and human rights that apply to all students, to each individual student, in Norway and in most democracies I can think of.

4. Extensions

The Norwegian PhD-candidacy stipend recipient Astrid Gillespie, studying at the University of Oslo, UiO, has recently performed qualitative research on the work environment within a set of such ‘teacher teams’.

Her paper presented at the IICE 2014 conference (Oct.29. 2014), titled “Collaboration between Special Education Teachers and Mathematic Teachers in Norwegian Secondary Schools”, reveals tactics among these teachers that amount to bullying – in Norway called “*mobbing*” – specifically acts of excluding individuals from one’s sphere of engage-

ment and cooperation – within ‘teacher teams; bullying by social alliances who at any moment may decide to refuse to ‘cooperate’ with a given individual colleague, and in given situations actually do precisely that, in teacher-teams ordered to ‘cooperate’ while being allowed to ‘self-regulate’ in the work-place, a work-place environment design similar to the learning-environment design that runs on the ‘peer-assessment’ and ‘threat of exclusion by peers from the very vessel of an obligatory learning experience’ – a blatant violation of law.

These are examples of social alliances controlling the work-places, inevitably partly by social criteria; a ‘local freedom to bully’ that controls any given individual who might think and speak a different point of view, or, naturally, who might display a level of knowledge or wisdom that threatens the social dominance of the local majority alliance.

These are teachers that were subjected to the same officially designed unofficial local totalitarianism in the exclusion-by-peers threat operated obligatory group-work during their teacher training; and these are some of the teachers that parents of peer-abused children often view as blind to the bullying of individual students going on right in front of their noses.

The work-place peer-alliance-regime is an environment very similar to the one that exists within Norway’s institutions of pedagogical studies, in Norway’s teacher courses and courses in the learning sciences; a formalized informal group-bully-regime that constitutes unlawful Meta-Pedagogy, left to itself by politicians who officially refer to teachers as “experts” and say it is the teachers who must find solutions to the bullying-problem – politicians largely unaware that they are referring to a domain that treats Philosophy with suspicion and who clearly wishes to be left to its own ‘self-regulation’ as it controls ‘the selves’ within its reach by unlawful means, the ‘peer-group-regime’; leaving the individual unprotected and robbed of the rights that apply by law, both in the pedagogic work-place and in pedagogical studies; a ‘selves-regulating’ domain that largely fails to ‘regulate’ ‘its own’ errors of theory and practice whenever theory and practice are part of a ‘consensus’ – until it is forced to change, by external intervention.

It is the young minds exposed to this specific human rights violation and lawlessness in Norwegian teacher training who become the teachers whom the mothers of teen suicide victims say are largely blind to the mechanisms of bullying, and who behave as if they are not directly and personally responsible for the bullying among their own students, including the bullying they do not see but could see if they behaved differently.

The connection between the exclusion-by-peers-threat learning-environment design and the much discussed universal problem of school bullying is

obvious. It isn’t a cause-and-effect relation but the even closer relation of being two sides of the same problematic phenomenon, an apparent syndrome when viewed in a limited perspective. It is one single superordinate phenomenon, each end of it extending into a merely apparently separate social sphere. It is one and the same dynamic movement (of individuals) viewed from diverse angles, an institutionalized vicious circle: a re-cycling from Meta-Pedagogy (the teaching of pedagogy) to Pedagogy proper (the teaching of children) and from there to all parts of the community and back into Meta-Pedagogy; in other words an institutionally designed and initiated self-generating preservation of the structures that amplify the problem called ‘bullying’ (Norw.: *mobbing*), where the perpetrator in each instance is by proxy, via a socially dominant fraction, inasmuch as the designer and immediate Instigator of each instance is the local partaker in the meta-pedagogical consensus – the teacher of pedagogy, as well as the locally ‘self-governing’ regional institution allowed to carry on in this manner.

The syndrome is one where the individuals engaged in one social loop (for example in the courses of pedagogy) fail to see the rest of the circle (one part inside pedagogy proper, another in society as a whole), or fail to adequately articulate the system and loses faith in its reality. The vicious circle isn’t seen because it isn’t understood – YET.

The type of bullying that is committed by a group or mass of individuals against an individual or a minority is a phenomenon I would call “*gruppe-mobbing*” (“group bullying”) in Norwegian, though I am inventing that term, since Norwegians only see the generic notion “*mobbing*” (bullying) and actually stick the label “a bully” (Norw. noun: “*en mobber*”) on whomever displays outrage and openly criticizes someone. Norwegians even tend to see the ‘group’ as ‘being bullied by’ the individual criticizing it, which is why I am viewed as a ‘bully’ when I openly accuse teams of metapedagogues of warping cognitive science and violating human rights and law – through the mentioned obligatory-group-work remote control by group-bullying operating where groups are allowed to assess its individual members, form alliances that expel individuals from their ‘group’ (at any moment during obligatory group work), groups allowed to keep sole ownership of the ‘group-work’ produced up to the point in time when ‘it’ excludes an individual that ‘it’, the ‘group’, claims to be a “non-contributor”.

Students of pedagogy that are exposed to this form of institutional remote control by group-bullying tend to very quickly develop the blindness needed to not see themselves as either victims or perpetrators but instead see themselves merely as partakers in established consensus, and this is precisely the blindness reported by mothers of victims of bullying; an empirically observed

blindness existing – among teachers – towards the instances of student-bullying reported endlessly in Norwegian media the last decade or so. These are media reports that intensify each time a teen suicide catches the interest of the same media operators who ignore the role played by the internally trained teachers of future teachers of children, individuals once trained by the group-work method I have just described; then trained by the dominating peer-groups in subsequent local ‘self-regulating regulators’ of Norwegian primary- and secondary schools (the social-criteria-driven unregulated spheres of so-called cooperation, which really are spheres of social survival in the work-place); deserted by national government; black-mailed into apparent consensus by social criteria, subjective such, criteria no one can pin-point, inasmuch as it is impossible to give a universally valid definition of a ‘non-contributor in group’.

It is, for instance, not an act of ‘non-contribution’ to silently listen to one or more group-members and nod in agreement or gratitude, but is in fact contribution by verification, even if all one does is ‘listen’; and the opposite, contribution by negation or refusing to go along when the dominant alliance within a group ‘votes’ on how matters shall be done, is ‘contribution by debate’ – not at all a ‘refusal to participate’, nor ‘non-contribution’.

5. Conclusion

The learning environment design I have just described and exemplified constitutes grave abuse, violation of human rights and even the violation of core principles of law.

Only the responsible teacher can lawfully assess and decide whether or not a passing grade in ‘cooperation skills’ is deserved or not by any given individual – and the delegation of the assessment of ‘individual contribution to the group’ to ‘the group’ constitutes the delegation of part of that assessment responsibility. It is unlawful, regardless of the words that are being put on it to give it the gloss that so far has allowed it to allure the senses into passivity towards it.

All parts of the assessment of ‘contribution-skills’, as well as the ‘actual contribution’, in obligatory group-work belong to the duties of the metapedagogue, the teacher of pedagogy, and no part of it can be delegated to classmates, whether we’re talking about the entire class or only a small part of the class. The formal act of calling the group of 5-6 classmates “the group” changes nothing. The assessment, any given part of it, as I just described, can only be lawfully performed by the teacher, and only based on what takes place during the presence of the assessing teacher, whether the subject studied is mathematics, English, biology, art or, as here, ‘pedagogy and the learning sciences’. The assess-

ment cannot be based on anything classmates – or ‘group-mates’ – might claim about matters not observed by the responsible teacher, and not even about matters observed by that teacher; and if it is, it is by logical necessity unlawful.

Operating under the explicitly or implicitly mediated risk of being expelled from the group – by one’s “group-mates” – during obligatory group work’, in itself constitutes abuse. As a learning environment design it is an unlawful tool, in Meta-Pedagogy as elsewhere in education, regardless of how many ‘votes’ any given ‘peer-exclusion’ were to be based on.

Then there is the determining principle of duty and right, which informs our reason that:

Every duty implicates a reciprocal right.

With the ‘duty’ to participate comes the ‘right’ to participate – in this case the ‘right’ to become a member of any given group until it reaches the size limit dictated by the responsible teacher, the designer, who, naturally, is present during all phases that are to be assessed; and each individual has the right to remain a member until the obligatory group-work officially ends. In the process of forming such groups no ‘self-constituting group’ (team) can lawfully be ‘allowed to deny’ an individual to become a member and remain a member of that group until the period of ‘obligatory group work officially ends. An actual case of ‘peer-operated exclusion’ that is not prevented or stopped by the responsible teacher of pedagogy constitutes neglect of duty, and universally so, I contend; inasmuch as I suggest three things are certain: student- initiated, -operated or -executed exclusion of individuals, any individual, from the very vessel of obligatory group-work – ‘the group’ – is unlawful; it is against human rights; and it is also unhealthy.

This paper, therefore, is a call for the need to intervene internationally in the current situation, and at the same time decline to entertain the false explanations, evasions and so on that naturally will be mobilized as a defense in order to derail such intervention. Intervention may be political, academic and/or of a private nature; and it may be in the form of letters, email, telephone calls and journalism. Journalism, however, needs to originate and be funded outside Norway, and it needs to be of the relentlessly investigative kind; relentless in the sense that it persists when the aggression and manipulation attempts towards it culminates.

Politically this is a very slow matter to move to its completion, and its move can easily be stalled by political maneuvers, mishaps and misguided decisions. I have recently initiated talks with leading politicians regarding this matter, but much help is needed in order for this to move without grinding to a permanent halt inside the political arena. Without

politicians forcing the intervention through, though, Norway's academia will easily block it and keep it from going anywhere. It is, without exaggerating, a horrible state for a domain to be in, and left to its own it is likely to remain stuck in the quagmire it is presently in.

I reported the matter to the national Department of Education (*Utdanningsdepartementet*) in 2009 (under the Labor Party government), but it was utterly ignored. I recently reported it again, to the new government's (re-named) national "Department of Knowledge" (*Kunnskapsdepartementet*) – the same Department with a new name and some new participants. The 'newness' of some of its participants, though, changes little, inasmuch as the same acts of deferring to the mentioned confused group of local 'specialists-in-matters-consensed-on' will necessarily bring the same result as previous acts of deferring. These acts of centrally deferring to the domain, the local perpetrators, are obviously fear-based; and the fear is based on a basic ignorance among politicians that I hope to change, hence my recent initiative, where I am attempting to impose on a process that seems destined to mechanically repeat the motions that perpetuate the control that these perpetrators have.

This time around something different needs to be done, and it must involve an intervention in the political problem-solving-process itself, in order to compel national government into realizing that in this case it must intervene locally and directly – not through 'guidelines' emitted but through human agents emitted from central government, agents who act and speak directly to students of pedagogy in the lecture halls within each institution of the domain of teacher training and courses of pedagogy, in all local places.

The matter needs all the help it can possibly get. I shall attempt to answer all emails, in hopes they will be more numerous than I can manage to even read on my own, and I encourage the reader to immediately address a petition to the Norwegian national 'Department of Knowledge' regarding this matter.

6. References

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